



AMELIA EARHART

QUEEN OF THE AIR



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Level 1: Less than 810

Level 2: 810-1000L

Level 3: 1010-1200L

Level 4: 1210-1400L

Level
2

Amelia Mary Earhart, a famous female pilot, was born before airplanes even existed. She was born on July 24, 1897 in Atchison, Kansas. She was the daughter of Samuel Stanton Earhart and Amelia Otis Earhart. Like many little girls, Amelia spent a lot of time playing with her sister. But unlike other girls, Amelia's mom didn't want her daughters to just be "nice little girls." She wanted them to be nice, but she also wanted them to be adventurous. To be adventurous, that meant sometimes Amelia and her sister Muriel, who everyone called Pidge, didn't follow all of the rules or act like all the other little girls.

Amelia and Pidge used to climb trees, hunt rats with a rifle, and "belly-slam" their sleds downhill during winter. These were not things girls were supposed to do. In 1904, Amelia and her uncle pieced together a homemade ramp modeled after a roller coaster. They attached the ramp to the family's tool shed and Amelia rode down the ramp in a wooden box. The wooden box crashed and was shattered. Amelia's lip was bruised but she had never been more excited. She exclaimed, "Oh, Pidge, it's just like flying!" When Amelia was in high school, her family

moved to Chicago. Amelia looked for a school that taught lots of science, and went to Hyde Park High School. After she graduated, Amelia continued to research a career. She kept a scrapbook of newspaper clippings about successful women. These women worked jobs that most people thought belonged to men only, such as film production, law, advertising, management and engineering.

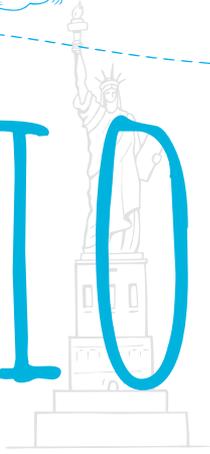
When Amelia graduated from high school, airplanes were new and exciting. In 1920, Amelia and her father visited an airfield where Amelia took her first ride in an airplane. That ride would change her life forever. She said, "By the time I had got two or three hundred feet off the ground I knew I had to fly."

So, Amelia learned to fly. Six months after her first flight, Amelia purchased a used, bright yellow airplane, which she nicknamed "The Canary." On October 22, 1922, Amelia flew her plane to an altitude of 14,000 feet, setting a world record for female pilots.

During the 1920s, pilots were busy breaking records for flying. Some wanted to fly higher



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than anyone else. Others wanted to fly farther. In 1927, Charles Linbergh was the first pilot to fly by himself, or “solo,” across the Atlantic Ocean. A year later, Amelia was asked to join another pilot on a flight across the Atlantic Ocean. She was excited to join him, but wanted to fly her own plane across the Atlantic. “Maybe someday,” she said, “I’ll try it alone.”

Amelia became famous because she was such a good woman pilot. Some reporters called her the “Queen of the Air.”

Amelia wanted to set records of her own. In August of 1928, she became the first woman pilot to fly solo across North America and back again. Then in 1931, she flew higher than anyone, flying up to 18,415 feet in altitude.

At the age of 34, on the morning of May 20, 1932, Amelia took off from the United States for Paris, France. She flew for 14 hours and 56 minutes. During that time, she had to fight strong winds, ice, and mechanical problems.

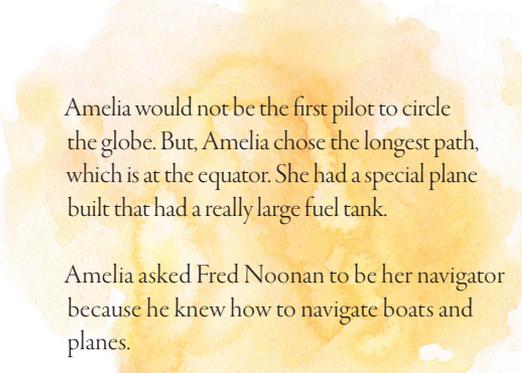
Finally she saw land and safely ended her flight. But she didn’t land in Paris. She had landed in a pasture in Ireland! It didn’t matter. She was the first woman to fly solo, non-stop, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Amelia wasn’t the only woman pilot, but she was the most famous woman pilot of that time. She even had her own brand of clothing and her own brand of luggage.

Amelia Earhart set many new records. But she wanted a new adventure. She wanted to fly around the world. This was going to be hard work, and she needed to plan carefully.

To prepare for her flight, Amelia asked a Hollywood stunt pilot named Paul Mantz to help improve her long distance flying skills. She also taught at Purdue University so she could teach other women who wanted to be like her. At the university, she worked in the Department of Aeronautics. She also needed help to prepare for her around-the-world flight.





Amelia would not be the first pilot to circle the globe. But, Amelia chose the longest path, which is at the equator. She had a special plane built that had a really large fuel tank.

Amelia asked Fred Noonan to be her navigator because he knew how to navigate boats and planes.

On March 17, 1937, Amelia started her adventure. For the first part of her flight, Amelia flew from California to Hawaii. She had a crew of three other people to help with the trip. The plane had troubles, so they had to stop the flight and return to California to get the plane fixed.

When the plane was fixed, Amelia tried again. This time she flew from California to Florida. Only her navigator, Fred Noonan, was with her this time. They flew from Miami, Florida on June 1, 1937. They made many stops in South America, Africa, India and Southeast Asia. Finally, they arrived at Lae, Papua New Guinea on June 29, 1937. They had flown about 22,000 miles! They only had one more section to go to finish the trip. The last section would be over the Pacific Ocean.

On July 2, 1937, Amelia and Fred took off in a heavily loaded plane. They were going to land on Howland Island, over 2,000 miles away. But something went wrong, and Amelia and Fred, in Amelia's plane, disappeared. Many people tried to find them, including the United States Coast Guard. They never found Amelia, Fred, or the plane. Some people think the plane might have had engine troubles. This made everyone sad, but some people say she disappeared while doing what she loved the most.

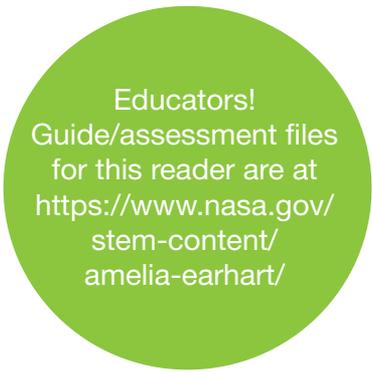
Other famous female aviators included Willa Brown, who was the first African American to earn a commercial flight license in the United States. Willa also helped train more than 200 students. Some of those pilots eventually became part of a famous fighter squadron during World War II called the Tuskegee Airmen. At age 16, Elinor Smith was the youngest pilot to earn a license, which was signed by Orville Wright. Another famous pilot was Jacqueline Cochran, the first woman to fly faster than the speed of sound.

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